production of edible oils decreased from 81.27 lakh MTs in 1996-97 to 55.17 lakh MTs in 2002-03.

(g) and (h) Some of the steps taken by the Government to enhance production of edible oils in the country are:

(i) A Technology Mission on Oilseeds is to increase the producion and productivity of oil seeds in the country.

(ii) Increasing the areas under non-traditional oilseeds crops, like tree borne oils seeds, rice barn oil etc. to increase availability of edible oils.

(iii) Assistance for Oil Palm development

(iv) Better incentives to producers through fixation of Minimum support Price (MSP)

(v) Use of indigenous oils in the manufacture of Vanaspati upto the level of 12% production has been made mandatory.

Suicides by Farmers

†*75. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some news related to the suicide by farmers have come to light in different States specially in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala;

(b) if so, the names of such States where from news regarding such suicides by the farmers have been received so far;

(c) whether Government have ascertained the root cause of these suicides; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Cases of suicide by farmers have been reported from the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tripura. Government of Kerala has reported no case of suicide by farmers in the State.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) and (d) As reported by the States, the main causes for committing suicide by farmers are crop failure, indebtedness due to loans taken at high rate of interest,, drought, social and economic insecurity, incurable ailments, addiction to alcohol and family disputes.

Development of transgenic varieties by ICAR

*76. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that transgenic varieties of twelve varieties of fruits, vegetables and grains will soon be developed in the country;

(b) if so, whether Government have studied the impact of transgenic crops on the environment, bio-technology and health of the consumers before giving consent for their development; and

(c) the details of precautions taken before they are developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) scientists?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has contemplated development of transgenics in rice, sorghum, maize, chickpea, pigeonpea, soybean, cotton, Indian mustard, banana, papaya, tomato, brinjal, potato and cassava through its institutes and also through a network project.

(b) Biosafety aspects of transgenics are studied before commercial release by the nodal department viz. Department of Bio-technology (DBT).

(c) Precautions are invariably taken before development of transgenic crops with regard to selection of targeted trait, appropriate genetic background, genes and technology, confinement of research material, and testing. For comprehensive testing for environment and biosafety, all transgenic crops/ varieties are provided to the DBT by the ICAR before their commercial release by Ministry of Environment & Forests as per EPA, 1986 regulations and guidelines.

Sickel-Cell Disease

*77. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that sickle-cell disease is most prevalent